



7 May 2014

The Honorable Ron Barber (AZ-02)
U.S. House of Representatives
1029 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Barber,

On behalf of the Association of the United States Navy (AUSN) we applaud and support your bill, H.R. 4574, the Strengthening Mental Health in Our Communities Act of 2014, which would maximize the access of individuals with mental illness to community-based services, to strengthen the impact of such services.

Our nation must renew our commitment to mental health and improving the lives of individuals and families impacted by mental illness. Alarming, according to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP), over 20 percent of suicides in the United States every year are military Veterans. Vital programs to help treat mental health need to be strengthened. For instance, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) needs reauthorization for many critical programs for community-based mental health services.

H.R. 4574 would, amongst other things, create a White House Office for Mental Health Policy that is responsible for developing and implementing a national strategy to combat mental health; bolster mental health for Veterans and Active Duty servicemembers; establish a Mental Health Advisory Board of individuals with mental illness, parents and guardians of individuals with mental illness, mental health professionals, and others; strengthen and invest in SAMHSA programs; provide access to quality mental healthcare in communities nationwide and enhance mental health research and coordination

Thank you for taking an active role in such an important issue to the military and Veteran communities in regards to their mental healthcare. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact me at 703-548-5800 or at anthony.wallis@ausn.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anthony A. Wallis".

Anthony A. Wallis
Legislative Director, AUSN